

Central Intelligence Agency



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DIRECTORATE OF INTELLIGENCE

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LIBYA: Qadhafi's Prospects for Survival

Summary

Opposition to Qadhafi continues to grow. Signs of an erosion in Qadhafi's political base of support include [redacted] widespread grumbling about deteriorating economic conditions. This increased malaise comes at a time when Libyan dissidents are enhancing their capability to conduct operations inside Libya. If the dissidents have supporters in the military willing to assist, we assess their chances of toppling Qadhafi at better than even.

[redacted]

Qadhafi's response to these developments has been to align himself more closely with hardliners. Qadhafi shows no inclination to rein in the extremists, curtail costly foreign adventures, or backtrack on his unpopular economic socialization programs, all of which could broaden his base of support. A dramatic improvement in living standards also would allow Qadhafi to regroup his political fortunes, but such an option would require an unexpected turn around in the demand for Libyan oil. In the meantime, his refusal to compromise any aspect of his revolution or to make any effort to improve local economic conditions only enhances the prospect of his ouster, either by dissidents, the military, or by fellow tribesmen in a preemptive move to protect their own positions. [redacted]

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This memorandum was prepared by [redacted] the Maghreb Branch, Arab-Israeli Division, Office of Near Eastern and South Asian Analysis. Information as of 31 July 1985 was used in preparation of this paper. Questions and comments should be directed to Chief, Arab-Israeli Division, [redacted]

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[REDACTED]

At the root of domestic discontent is unhappiness with the deteriorating standard of living. [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] Libyans in Tripoli consider living conditions there worse than ever. [REDACTED] residents are particularly distressed over continuing shortages of food and consumer goods and repeated breakdowns in public services, including medical care. [REDACTED]

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These grievances probably are aggravated by Qadhafi's continual exhortations to revolutionary activity, which further undermine the sense of security Libyans are seeking in their daily lives. In July, for example, Qadhafi ordered Western musical instruments in Libya destroyed as part of a new attack on symbols of Western culture. In addition, dissatisfied Libyan university students sent Qadhafi a memorandum in which they linked wasteful expenditures for misguided foreign adventures to the current economic difficulties. Many Libyans apparently are holding Qadhafi personally responsible for excesses committed by his loyalists in enforcing such dictums [REDACTED]

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Dissatisfaction with Qadhafi is finding expression in various ways. [REDACTED] anti-Qadhafi literature recently surfaced again in several Libyan cities and that graffiti has even appeared on walls near Qadhafi's headquarters in Tripoli. Security crackdowns following the Libyan exile attack on Qadhafi's headquarters in May 1984, previously had stifled such activity. These activities are in addition to disturbances among the Berber minority in northwest Libya, [REDACTED]

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Growing Support for the Opposition

Antiregime sentiment probably is facilitating attempts by Libyan exile organizations to build a network of support inside Libya. [REDACTED]

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The exiles apparently have weathered the setback they suffered when Sudan withdrew its support for the National Front for the Salvation of Libya (NFSL), the largest and most active Libyan opposition group, following President Nimeiri's removal last April. Cairo and Baghdad have replaced Khartoum as broadcast sites for anti-Qadhafi propaganda, [REDACTED]

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Several recent programs from Iraq indicate that Baghdad has broadened its contacts with Libyan opposition groups.

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A more important development for the dissidents is the recent increase in Algerian support.

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Increasing concern over Qadhafi's aggressive regional activities is behind expanding Egyptian, Iraqi, and Algerian involvement with the dissidents. Cairo is particularly worried about intensive covert Libyan efforts to create a network for subversion in Sudan. Algeria's antagonism toward Qadhafi, already strengthened by Tripoli's union agreement last year with traditional rival Morocco, probably has been fueled by Libya's efforts to expand its assets in Tunisia and by continued Libyan funding of Algerian exiles.

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Tripoli's provision of Scud surface-to-surface missiles to Iran earlier this year and its announcement last June of a "strategic alliance" with Tehran have hardened Iraqi resolve to counter Qadhafi.

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Despite their opposition to Qadhafi, Egypt, Iraq, and Algeria have so far been unable to agree on a common program for unseating him. Nonetheless, progress has been made toward bilateral cooperation, particularly between Egypt and Algeria,

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Even Egypt and Algeria, however, have doubts about the other's commitment and differing assessments of dissident prospects. They probably also fear Libyan terrorist or military reprisals, in our judgment.

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Regime Countermeasures

Qadhafi almost certainly perceives an increasing threat of a coup attempt against him. [REDACTED]
the roundups and interrogations of suspected dissidents [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] has grown. Security forces almost certainly are closely monitoring the activities of military officers, as many as 80 of whom may have been executed last March for their involvement in the first military coup plot in two years. [REDACTED]

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Prospects

Qadhafi in the past has temporarily compromised some of his radical principles to ease discontent, but his increasing reliance on youthful extremists in the revolutionary committees now limits his room to maneuver. Indeed, his recent speeches and actions indicate that he remains personally determined to sustain his revolution and to support foreign radicals. [REDACTED]

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[redacted]

If Qadhafi continues to reject compromise, he will need at a minimum a hefty boost in oil revenues to reduce the current climate of discontent. We doubt that recent attempts by Qadhafi's supporters to blame shortages of consumer goods on hoarding and mismanagement by local "fat cats" will satisfy many Libyans. Some Libyans may even take to the streets in protest if economic conditions continue to worsen. [redacted]

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By replacing seasoned professionals with young zealots, Qadhafi almost certainly has increased the pool of officers willing to plot against him. [redacted]

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[redacted]

[redacted] Former Armed Forces Chief of Staff Mustafa Kharrubi and Armed Forces Director General Abd Al-Rahman Al-Sayyid probably are particularly tempted to move against Qadhafi. [redacted] both have cause for concern over their declining influence at the expense of the revolutionary committees. [redacted]

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Libyan dissidents are wary of close involvement with any foreign backer, but access to Algerian territory [redacted]

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[redacted] will strengthen significantly their prospects for exploiting discontent. For the moment, the exiles alone probably have the capability to conduct successfully only isolated sabotage operations. Nevertheless, the dissidents probably hope to launch another attack on Qadhafi in the near future to capitalize on his unpopularity as well as on increased foreign support. If the dissidents have well-positioned supporters in the military willing to assist, we assess their chances of toppling Qadhafi at better than even. [redacted]

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